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Thesis

THE HISTORICAL TREND IN JESUS' BIOGRAPHY

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of the historical character of Jesus has been one of the foremost problems of modern Biblical research. The historical trend, that trend which endeavors to reconstruct the life of Jesus as it was lived in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago, has been the leading trend in Jesus-biography. As long as Jesus was looked upon from the supernatural viewpoint only and His historical life virtually ignored, it was natural that there would be no attempts made to write a biography of His earthly life.

But with the coming of historical research, scholars attempted to reconstruct His life and to write His biography just as the biographies of other great men in history have been written. And as the biographies of other great men have been affected by the time in which they were written, so the biographies of Jesus have been affected by the trend of thinking

in historical Jesus-research which was uppermost at the time of the writing of each.

As the pendulum of historical research has swung far to one side men have always arisen to swing it to the other side until it may be said that there have been certain trends or schools within the historical trend.

The writer's aim in this thesis will not be to prove the historicity of Jesus, nor to give a concise study of the historical research itself, but to study the effect of the various sub-trends, or schools, on the historical "Lives of Jesus"; how each "Life" has been colored by the particular point of view being emphasised at the time in which the biography was written. It will be an attempt to explain how historical research has affected the biographies of Jesus and the reason for the differences found in those biographies.

In order to do that it will be necessary, first, to make a survey of the development of the historical trend in the light of its general influence on the biographies.

The first chapter will deal with this development which will be divided into two periods, that before Strauss in which the primitive viewpoint, the rationalistic school, and the romantic reaction will be dealt with, and the period of Strauss and after, which will deal with the scientific research, the rise of the Marcan hypothesis, the rise of liberal theology, the eschatological question, and the skeptical attitude. An attempt will then be made to show the results of these years of historical research as seen in the present day thinking and as reflected in the modern biographies of Jesus generally.

The second chapter will deal with the sources of evidence of the historicity of Jesus. It is very essential that the biographers have a thorough knowledge of all the sources which give some light, no matter how small, on the life and personality of Jesus. The reader of modern biographies of Jesus must also know something of these sources in order to have a more complete understanding of the biographies.

Having studied the trends influencing the biographers and the sources which they use in reconstructing the life of Jesus, a brief analysis will be made

of some of the leading modern "Lives of Jesus" in the light of this knowledge. The influence on each biography of the various lines of thought in the historical trend will be noted and suggestions made as to how the principal problems are dealt with.

In the summary the general conclusions made in the foregoing chapters will be brought together.

CHAPTER I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HISTORICAL TREND

A. The Period Before Strauss:

1. The Primitive Viewpoint.

The primitive Christian Church was not so much concerned about men believing in a historical Jesus as they were in their believing in a living and glorified Christ of mystical experience. A biography of Jesus was not, therefore, written, but only detatched sayings, a few miracles, and the account of His death and resurrection. But as time went on and those who took the historical life of Jesus more or less for granted were gone, there grew a desire among the Christians to bring together the Jesus of history and the Christ of experience. This desire resulted in two doctrines of opposite extremes ---. Gnosticism and the Logos Christology. These, however, instead of bringing forth the historical Jesus sublimated Him into a "supra-mundane Idea".[1] In 325 A.D. we find the bishops of the Church gathered at Nicea and agreeing on the

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1. Schweitzer, Albert, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 3.

phrase that Jesus is "very God of very God" thus sublimating more than ever the historical Life.

As Jesus became more and more the Christ of dogma and less and less the Jesus of history, it became more difficult for man to get back to the historical Jesus. But the turning point came when men rebelled against the tyranny of dogma and began to seek the Jesus of history.

The study of the historical life of Jesus "falls into two definite periods, that before Strauss and that after Strauss. The dominant interest in the first is the question of miracle. What terms are possible between a historical treatment and the acceptance of supernatural events? With the advent of Strauss this problem found a solution, viz., that these events have no rightful place in history, but are simply mythical elements in the sources."[1] Meanwhile other problems were also arising such as the eschatological views and the views concerning the self-consciousness of Jesus.

Schweitzer says that the greatest Lives of Jesus have been written in hate. "It was not so much hate of the Person of Jesus as of the supernatural nimbus with which it was so easy to surround Him, and with which He had in fact been surrounded. They were eager to picture

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1. Schweitzer, Albert, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 10.

Him as truly and purely human, to strip from Him the robes of splendour with which He had been apparelled, and clothe Him once more with the coarse garments in which He walked in Galilee."[1]

2. The Rationalists.

Historical research of the Life of Jesus began in Germany with Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) who wrote the first "Life of Jesus" from a historical point of view. Because the world had in no way been prepared for such a life of Jesus, Reimarus would no doubt have suffered severe persecution had his work been published during his life. But it was published after his death by Lessing between 1774 and 1778 with the purpose of summoning forward as fine a defender of religion as Reimarus had been its assailant.

This was the first time that the criticism of tradition had ever been undertaken by a mind which was thoroughly conversant with the sources and historical. He was the first to recognize the importance of eschatology in the teaching of Jesus. He held that Jesus' Messiahship was a political Messiahship - the kingship of the son of David.

Reimarus' object was to show that "Christianity had but a feeble base of support."[2] and thus more fully justify natural religion. He held that "the sole

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1. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Pp. 4-5
2. Goguel, Maurice, Jesus the Nazarene: Myth or History? P. 3

argument which could save the credit of Christianity would be a proof that the Parousia had really taken place at the time for which it was announced: and obviously no such proof can be produced."[1] He did not thereby wish to destroy all religious faith, but only the"orthodox Christian dogma of a supernatural Jesus as the second person of the Godhead, coming down from heaven."[2]

Reimarus practically ignored the Fourth Gospel and was thus perhaps the first to base a life of Jesus on the Synoptic Gospels.

Although he was mistaken in many of his ideas and his work was not accepted at the time of publication, he had taken a great stride forward far beyond his contemporaries, in critical study of the life of Jesus and his work greatly influenced those who came sometime later.

Karl Friedrich Bahrdt (1741-1792) was the first to write a "ficticious" life of Jesus. This he wrote in the form of a sentimental novel and shortly afterward (1802) another similar book followed written by Venturini. In both of these works Jesus is shown to have been but clay in the hands of the potter - the potter being the secret order of the Essenes. The miracles of Jesus are

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1. Schweitzer,A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus,Pg.?2
2. Weinel & Widgery, Jesus in the 19th Century and After, Page 43.

explained as being by the secret workings of the Essenes. Jesus is said by Venturini to have carried a portable medicine chest with Him in order to work his cures. A history of the Essenes is given which is purely an invention of these writers!

The gaps in the gospel narratives are filled in with immaginative material to explain the reason for the recorded events. Schweitzer says: "Venturini's 'Non-Supernatural' History of the Great Prophet of Nazareth' may almost be said to be reissued annually down to the present day, for all the ficticious 'Lives' go back directly or indirectly to the type which he created. It is plagiarised more freely than any other Life of Jesus, although practically unknown by name."[1]

The rationalists who were at the height of their glory from about the middle of the eighteenth century to about the middle of the ninteenth, sought to eliminate all which was supernatural from the life of Jesus. Miracles are explained as being by natural causes.

The early rationalists were not so bold as the later ones and combined the natural and supernatural in their "Lives". "No rude hands were to be laid upon

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1. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 47.

it. Their purpose was simply to gain a clearer view of the course of our Lord's earthly and human life."[1] But whereever a miracle can be explained by a natural cause they hasten to do so.

In 1768 the work of Johann Jakob Hess, "History of the Last Three Years of the Life of Jesus",appeared. This is a paraphrase of the harmony of the four Gospels - a paraphrase which distroys the beauty of the Gospel language and brings Jesus down to the eighteenth century. The miraculous birth and the resurrection are retained because of their doctrinal value.

Franz Volkmar Reinhard in 1781 published a similar "Life",but of a higher order, in which he strives to show that the plan which the Founder of the Christian religion adopted for the benefit of mankind excelled any other plan ever made.

Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus is another representative of the Rational school. His work "The Life of Jesus as the Basis of a Purely Historical Account of Early Christianity" which was published in 1828 is a highly rationalistic "Life" and received much condemnation.

Paulus explains the miracles of Jesus by carefully

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1. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 28.

examining the records and coming to the conclusion that they are "misunderstandings on the part of the evangelists or of their interpreters." His "Life" is little more than a harmony of the four gospels with comments. For him the question of miracle did not exist and, although his work is practically given over to explaining away so-called miracles he states in his preface,

"My greatest wish is that my opinions concerning the miracles should not be taken as the chief thing. How empty religion or the devotion to God would be, if the truth of it depended upon whether one believed in miracles or not!"

3. The Romantic Reaction.

Gradually the stern"rationalism which accepts only so much of religion as can justify itself at the bar of reason, and which conceives and represents the origin of religion in accordance with this principle"[1], softened into a more romantic trend. "A deeper conception of religion and of life, of miracle and of sacred history" grew up.[2]

"In place of the old doctrine of inspiration, and of criticism equally unhistorical, there arose first definitely in Lessing, a new historical view of the origins of Christianity. Christianity was now thought of as having arisen not from a book,but from the experience of a society: with this view came insight into the origin and nature of a varying oral tradition that had been transmitted orally for at least thirty or forty years, till the time when it was first written down." 3

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1. Schweitzer,A.,_The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Pg.27
2. Weinel & Widgery,Jesus in the 19th Century and After,Pg.47
3. Ibid,, Page 48

Lessing believed that the Bible contained historical and scientific matters as well as religious and that "we can base our faith neither upon a book taken to be inspired nor upon alleged historical facts. For, once for all, facts can never be so absolutely surely established as to serve as a basis for a philosophy of life."[1] There was a tendency to reject religion on the grounds of the results of historical research and this Lessing desired to prevent.

He gave a new and broader conception of history and looked upon the events of the history of mankind as God's way of teaching men. He sought not to destroy the old dogma but to raise it to a higher level by separating it from Jesus and giving it a philosophical interpretation.

Johann Gottfried Herder, who was of the Romantic school, wrote two lives of Jesus in which he rose above the old rationalists in his deeper insight and appreciation of history. He recognized the futility of all attempts to harmonize the Synoptists with John, but he places as much value on one as the other and says that they must stand separately. Nevertheless, he saw that a life of Jesus could be constructed either

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1. Weinel & Widgery, Jesus in the 19th Century and After, Page 49.

from the Synoptics or from John. According to Herder the Gospel of John was needed "as a protest against the narrowness of the 'Palestinian Gospels'".[1]

Herder explains the miracles of Jesus as necessary to help the people of that miracle-loving age. According to him "miracles are to be accepted, in a limited sense, on the ground of the evidence of history. Like the early rationalists he combines the supernatural and the natural and does not feel that miracles need to be rejected just because the historical standpoint is accepted. "He contributed much to the clearing up of ideas, but by evading the question of miracle he slurred over a difficulty which needed to be faced and solved before it should be possible to entertain the hope of forming a really historical conception of the life of Jesus."[2]

Herder was the first to rise above the treatment of history by the rationalists. He saw that history was not made by fate but by the "genius of humanity". This was, indeed, the keynote of the Romantic reaction - the elevation of man; the appreciation of his powers, and among these, the appreciation of the genius of Jesus.

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1. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 35
2. Ibid., Pages 36-37

Herder sees the source of the whole of history in Jesus. "Before the whole of history that finds its source in thee, thou standest alone!"[1]

Such men as Goethe and Kant belong to the Romantic school. Goethe said that "To enter upon a historical and critical examination of the gospels is like trying to empty the sea. The best way, therefore, without further ado, is to adhere to that which is set down, and to appropriate to one's self as much as one can use for one's moral strengthening and culture."[2] He did not try to rationalize the miracles, but saw behind them the deep truths of life.

The Rationalists had made history a drab and lifeless thing; Herder and Goethe made it glow with new meaning. English thought was influenced by these scholars and England produced for this Romantic period such men as Carlyle and Shelley who also put a new interest and evaluation upon history. But not only did they reevaluate history, they also brought about a greater appreciation of religion.

In 1829 there appeared in Germany a Life of Jesus, "Das Leben Jesu zunachst fur akaemische Studien," which clearly showed the transition through which the study of Jesus' life was passing. This Life was written

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1. Weinel & Widgery, Jesus in the 19th Century and After, Quoted on Page 55
2. Ibid., Page 53

by Karl August Hase. In regard to miracles he clings to the old rationalistic attempt at a solution, but in other ways he has the appreciation of the Romantic school. His is "the first attempt by a fully equipped scholar to resonstruct the life of Jesus on a purely historical basis."[1]

He is the forerunner of many who came afterward who saw in the life of Jesus two distinct periods - in the first period Jesus accepts the prevailing idea of the Messiah, while in the second He constructs His own idea of the Messiah. Schweitzer says that "Hase created the modern historico-psychological picture of Jesus. The introduction of this more penetrating psychology would alone suffice to place him in advance of the rationals."[2] Weinel places him, with some doubt, with the Liberals.

In 1819 the great theologian of the Romantic period, Dr.F.E.D.Schleiermacher, introduced into his lectures "The Life of Jesus." In 1864 these lectures were published from a student notebook. Schleiermacher opposed Rationalism and attempted to uphold the dogma of the Church. Yet his theology differs somewhat

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1. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 59
2. Ibid. Page 61

from that of the Church. He tries to maintain a happy medium between the humanity of Jesus and the divinity of Jesus; to prevent himself and others from going too far either way in their thinking. He does not have a firm grasp upon history and falls behind the historical knowledge of his time in his interpretation of various passages. He is, nevertheless, influenced by the rationalists to some extent. This is especially shown in his attitude toward the resurrection of Jesus which he believes to have been a reanimation after apparent death. Throughout, he prefers the Gospel of John to the Synoptics - for him this book alone is authoritative for the outline of the life of Jesus.

The Romantic movement did not produce a purely Romantic Life of Jesus. Neither did it deepen the spiritual life as one might suppose it would. It gave a lack of freedom and men crave freedom. Its influence, nevertheless, is seen in the works of Strauss and Renan.

B. The Period of Strauss and After:

1. The Scientific Research.

The first purely scientific research of the life of Jesus was made by David Friedrich Strauss. Strauss examined the records of Jesus' life, using the same scientific methods which were used in research of secular history. As attempts had been made to bring the early accounts of Roman history nearer to the understanding of the people, so Strauss attempted to bring the early accounts of Christian origins nearer to the understanding of the people and explain them as myth and legend.

It was a courageous and painful task and brought with it much suffering. Strauss was misunderstood and accused of reducing Jesus Himself to myth. This he did not do, but he did reduce the greater part of the gospel records to myth. The criteria which he used in distinguishing the myth from real history were, as given by Weinel, as follows;

" 1. To be regarded as historically valid a narrative must neither be inconsistent with itself nor in contradiction with other accounts.

2. If the form be poetical; if, the actors converse in hymns, in a more diffuse and elevated strain than might be expected from their training or their situations, then these discourses at least cannot be accepted as historical."[1]

Strauss believed that the principal thing which had kept men from seeing the myth in the gospels was the common belief that the gospels of Matthew and John were written by eyewitnesses, and also a narrow conception of the word "myth". He claims to approach the subject with a mind free from prejudice, but he has been accused by his opponents of having been prejudiced before he began his research to the belief that the gospel records were largely myth.

Strauss was greatly influenced by the Hegelian philosophy. He considers separately each incident of the life of Jesus, first as explained supernaturally and then rationalistically and refutes one explanation by the other.

The gospel of John was the favorite gospel of the rationalists because it contained fewer miracles than the other gospels, but Strauss is unfavorable to it as a historical source, because it is more strongly

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1. Weinel & Wiegery, Jesus in the 19th Century and After, Pages 78-79

dominated by theology. This differentiating of the gospel of John and the Synoptics once more aided in the study of the historical life of Jesus. But the Marcan theory was temporarily overthrown when Strauss decided that Mark also was an inferior Gospel because its style seemed to him artificial. Thus in destroying these two gospels which had been the main support of previous lives of Jesus he would take the two supporting pillars from under the foundation of both rationalism and supernaturalism.

The Messianic consciousness of Jesus, Strauss believed to be historical. According to him, Jesus' Messiahship was neither spiritual nor political, but His Messianic plans were to be established by Divine intervention. Although Jesus was of human parentage He believed that He would be taken up to Heaven after His death and would return to establish His Kingdom.

The second problem which Strauss raised was the problem of the relation of the Jesus-of history to the ideal Christ. In this matter Strauss' words and thoughts are those of Hegel and makes of the ideal Christ an idea - a concept.

The third problem was the relation of the Synoptics to John. The rationalists had rejected the synoptics and built upon John. Now Strauss took their foundation from under them. This brought about the necessity for the surrender of the whole historical tradition.

Strauss' first Life of Jesus "critically examined" brought a storm of protest. The Romantic reaction had carried so-called scientific theology far from the old rationalism and Strauss' attitude toward miracle aroused opposition with the anti-rationalists. He brought to light the superficial reasoning of Hase and Schleiermacher.

The chief of those opposing Strauss were Tholuck, Neander, Ammon, Wilke, and Bauer. "Tholuck's work professedly aims only at presenting a 'historical argument for the credibility of the miracle stories of the Gospels.'"[1] "Even if we admit", he says, "the scientific position that no act can have proceeded from Christ which transcends the laws of nature, there is still room for the mediating view of Christ's miracle-working activity. This leads us to think of mysterious powers of nature as operating in the history of Christ - powers such as we have some partial knowledge of, as, for example, those magnetic powers

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1. Schweitzer, A., The Quest for the Historical Jesus", Page 101.

which have survived down to our own time, like ghosts lingering on after the coming of day."[1]
He then goes on to criticize Strauss for discarding miracles and accuses him of approaching the gospels "with the conviction that miracles are impossible."

Neander wrote a life of Jesus in which he refuted Strauss' arguments. This work was very popular, but compromising.

Ammon was the only writer who really tackled the problem and offered the solution of "subordinating the indefinite chronological data of the Synoptists, of whom, after all, only one was or could have been, an eyewitness, to the ordered narrative of John."[2]

Ammon, though opposing Strauss' view, is respectful toward Strauss himself. He holds a view toward miracles much like that of Kant. He says that "it is no doubt certain that every act or causation which goes forth from God must be immediate, universal, and eternal, because it is thought as an effect of His will, which is exalted above space and time and interpenetrates both of them, but without abolishing them, leaving them undisturbed in their continuity and succession."[3]

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1. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 191, Quoted.
2. Ibid., Quoted on Page 117
3. Ibid., Quoted on page 105

Ammon is largely rationalistic, however, explaining the miracles by such natural causes as cures effected through the use of medicines and the feeding of the five thousand by the liberal giving by all in the crowd who had food. In regard to the resurrection of Jesus he believes that the death of Jesus is historically true, but that the resurrection is not.

As a whole Ammon's Life of Jesus is but a revival of the slumbering spirit of rationalism.

"With Strauss begins the period of the non-miraculous view of the Life of Jesus; all other views exhausted themselves in the struggle against him, and subsequently abandoned position after position without waiting to be attacked. ... Supernaturalism practically separated itself from the serious study of history. It is not possible to date the stages of this process. After the first outburst of excitement everything seems to go on as quietly as before; the only difference is that the question of miracle constantly falls more and more into the background. In the modern period of the study of the Life of Jesus, which begins about the middle of the 'sixties, it has lost all importance.

... What has been gained is only that the exclusion of miracle from our view of history has been universally recognized as a principle of criticism, so that miracle no longer concerns the historian either positively or negatively." 1

Following the storm of protest which came after Strauss' first "life of Jesus" which had had two editions, he published a third edition in which he recanted much that he had said before and compromised

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1. Schweitzer, A., "The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 111

with Tholuck and Neander the most uncritical of his opponents. Then seeing his mistake and the inconsistancies he had wrought he published a fourth edition in which he retracted all his compromises and went back to the positions held in his first Life. He did not try to see a connexion between the Synoptics and the Fourth gospel which might solve his problem and when Weisse the very next year set forth the hypothesis that the gospels of Matthew and Luke were based on the gospel of Mark he refused to accept the Marcan hypothesis.

Bruno Bauer, a young lecturer at the university of Berlin, reviewed Strauss' Life of Jesus and absolutely condemned Strauss' work. Later, he himself went far beyond Strauss in his scientific research of the life of Jesus. He tears down completely the traditional view of Jesus and says that Jesus either never lived or that no account of his life and sayings has been preserved. He sees in the work of Seneca the same religious principles which were supposed to have been set forth by Jesus. According to Bauer the Jews had no Messianic hope.

But Bruno Bauer did not receive much attention because his works followed too closely after the "Lives" of Strauss and the people's attention was still on Strauss.

2. The Marcan Hypothesis.

In the middle of the nineteenth century the Marcan theory arose "that the Gospel of Mark is not only the earliest and most valuable source of facts, but differs from the other Gospels in embodying a more or less clear and historically intelligible view of the connexion of events."[1]

Christian Hermann Weisse was the chief exponent of the Marcan hypothesis. The propositions on which Weisse's argument for the priority of Mark rests, as given by Schweitzer, are as follows:

> " 1. In the first and third Gospels, traces of a common plan are found only in those parts which they have in common with Mark, not in those which are common to them, but not to Mark also.
> 2. In those parts which the three Gospels have in common, the 'agreement' of the other two is mediated through Mark.
> 3. In those sections which the First and Third gospels have, but Mark has not, the agreement consists in the language and incidents, not in the order. Their common source, therefore, the 'Logia' of Matthew, did not contain any type of tradition which gave an order of narration different from that of Mark.
> 4. The divergences of wording between the two other Synoptists is in general in the parts where both have drawn on the Logia document than where Mark is their source.
> 5. The first Evangelist reproduces this Logia-document more faithfully than Luke does; but his Gospel seems to have been of later origin." 2

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1. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 10 (Footnote)
2. Ibid., Page 123-124.

Weisse begins where Strauss left off and discovers, as Strauss did not, some general connection between the elements in the Gospel tradition "which would represent a historically certain element in the life of Jesus, and thus serve as a better standard by which to determine the extent of myth than can possibly be found in the subjective impression upon which Strauss relies."[1] But, like Strauss, Weisse believes that Jesus could not have taught the ideas of Himself found in the Fourth Gospel. Some portions of the gospel of John he believes to go back to John the Apostle, but not all of the Gospel.

Alexander Schweizer, a pupil of Schleiermacher, brought forth a hypothesis at this time concerning the genuineness of the Gospel of John. He, unlike Weisse, believed that certain parts of the narrative is Johannine, but his hypothesis does not hold true to historical research throughout.

Weisse was the first to give the psychological explanation to the resurrection. He says, "The resurrection of Jesus is a fact which belongs to the domain of the spiritual and psychic life, and which is not related

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1. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 122.

to outward corporeal existence in such a way that the body which was laid in the grave could have shared therein."

"In his determined opposition to the recognition of eschatology in Strauss' first Life of Jesus, Weisse ... lays down the lives which were to be followed by the 'liberal' Lives of Jesus of the 'sixties and following years, which only differ from him, not always to their advantage, in their more elaborate interpretation of the detail of Mark."[1].

3. The Liberals.

Liberalism, while believing firmly in the hisorricity of Jesus, thought of Him not as a Divine Saviour or even as a prophet, but as a social reformer. It stressed the dignity and worth of human nature and pictured Jesus as purely human; a social reformer who preached a kingdom based on love and gentleness; a reformer placed, not in the environment of Palestine nearly two thousand years ago, but a reformer placed in an eighteenth century environment.

But in making Jesus a purely human reformer and moral teacher the Liberals failed to see in Him His

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1. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 136.

remarkable uniqueness. In failing to appreciate the atmosphere of Jesus' surroundings and His background they failed to interpret rightly His words concerning the coming of the Kingdom. And strange to say, Liberalism did not have the power to hold its own supporters for long - many of them turned to belief in the Christ-myth of the early Strauss, or to a more orthodox view than Liberalism offered.

Schweitzer says that "the striking thing about these critical Lives of Jesus was that they unconsciously prepared the way for a deeper historical view which could not have been reached apart from them."[1]

"There is this in common between rationalism and the liberal critical method, that each had followed out a theory to its ultimate consequences. The liberal critical school had carried to its limit the explaination of the connexion of the actions of Jesus, and of the events of His life, by a "natural" psychology; and the conclusions to which they had been driven had prepared the way for the recognition that the natural psychology is not here the historical psychology, but that the later must be deduced from certain historical data. Thus through the meritorious and magnificently sincere work of the liberal critical school the a priori 'natural' psychology gave way to the eschatological. That is the new result, from the historical point of view, of the study of the life of Jesus in the post-Straussian period." 2

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1. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 221
2. Ibid., Page 221

4. The Eschatological Question.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century there arose a controversy over the question of Jesus' Messianic consciousness. The question at issue was: Did Jesus consciously claim Messiahship or are His claims to Messiahship interpolations of His disciples, since the events of His life seem to contradict any claim of Messiahship?

This question had been dealt with in part before, but then only a small amount of the Jewish Apocalyptic literature was known. A mass of new sources were discovered during the nineteenth century. The book of Enoch was found in Ethiopian Manasteries and after that many more books were discovered written in the Syriac, Armenian, Slavic, and Coptic languages. These discoveries have shown the intense Messianic expectation of the Jewish people; their idea of the Messiah and how nearly that conception was found in the life of Jesus. As Weinel says, "The Christology was practically completed before Jesus came upon earth."

The thought of Jesus from the Jewish Messianic point of view greatly affected the picture of Jesus given in the biographies from then on. The Lives began

to take on a more eschatological plan, going from one extreme to the other with the idea. The leading upholders of the eschatological view were Johannes Weiss, Colani, and Schweitzer.

The eschatological ideas did not grow without some opposition, however. Wilhelm Bousset believed that the eschatological idea does not give a true picture of the life of Jesus as a whole, for he believes that Jesus' joy in life came not from His eschatological views, as the eschatologists believe, but from the pure piety of His life. He spiritualized the apocalyptic ideas of the Jews and raised them above their national and political views.

Albert Reville and Wendt believed that the Messianic idea was forced upon Jesus later and that Jesus had no notion of being the Messiah.

Paul Wernle and others believed that the terms which have been applied to apocolyptic Jesus - Son of God, Son of Man, Messiah - are inappropriate to Him and have been attributed to Him by early Christianity.

The eschatological school centering around Albert Schweitzer is today one of the great schools of modern Jesus-research.

5. The Skeptics.

The historical study of the life of Jesus has led many to a deeper appreciation of and stronger belief in the historical Jesus, but some have been led to doubt the very existence of the historical Jesus. These, however, as a rule are neither thoroughgoing historians nor theologians.

Although Strauss did not relegate Jesus Himself to the plain of myth, he may be said to be the forerunner of the modern idea of the Christ-myth. Such men as J.M.Robertson, Albert Kalthoff, Peter Jensen, Arthur Drews, and W.B.Smith, have written widely on Jesus, but these men all deny in one form or another the historical Jesus and consign the gospel accounts, more or less wholly, to the field of myth and their works are arguments against belief in the historical Jesus.

J.M.Robertson believes that the gospel records are made up of pagan myths. He gives two reasons for this belief, first, the Jesus of the Pauline Christology is an unnatural, mythical being and, second, the"fact" that everything in the gospels can be found in pagan mythology.

Kalthorr's ideas are practically the same as those of Bauer worked over. He believes that there may have been a person by the name of Jesus, but if there was he had nothing to do with the founding of Christianity which originated in Rome. The pictures of Jesus given in the gospel records is the picture of the struggles of the Christian Community.

Jensen objects to being classed with those who deny the existence of the historical Jesus, but his ideas are much the same. He says:

"Of the career of the alleged founder of Christianity we know nothing, or at least as good as nothing. ... We serve in our cathedrals and houses of prayer, in our churches and schools, in palace and hut, a Babylonian god, Babylonian gods." 1.

The five points which Arthur Drews stresses in his denial of the historical Jesus are:

1. There existed before the Jesus of the gospels the cultor a Jesus-god.

2. Paul does not know the historical Jesus.

3. "The gospels do not contain the history of an actual man, but only the myth of the god-man."

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1. Case, S.J., The Historicity of Jesus, Page 45

4. The Baptism, Last Supper, Crucifixion, and Resurrection are attributed to borrowings from cult-symbolism.

5. The historical Jesus of theological criticism is so uncertain that faith in Him cannot be regarded as indespensible for salvation.

W.B.Smith also believed Christianity to have arisen from a Jesus-cult existing in the first century B.C. and the New Testament accounts of Him to be mostly the doctrine concerning the Jesus-god.

There are others of the skeptical school, but they all, while differing in minor points, agree in the unreliability of all evidence for a historical Jesus.

"It is an obvious fact that the champions of this modern radicalism have not approached their task as specialists in the field of early Christian history, nor are they thoroughly equipped to use the tools of that science. Not only so, but they deliberately discard those tools and condemn the methods of the historical theologians as unscientific, because he allows Jesus an especially significant place and refuses to push critical skepticism to what they regard the logical issue - that is, the denial of Jesus' existence." 2

The writings of these men brought a flood of protesting works. Thomas James Thorburn published, in 1912 a book "Jesus the Christ:Historical or Mythical?

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2. Case, S.J., The Historicity of Jesus, Page 59

A Reply to Professor Drews' Die Christusmythe". Maurice Goguel, of Paris, published his "Jesus the Nazarene: Myth or History?" in 1926. "The Historicity of Jesus: A criticism of the contention that Jesus never lived, a statement of the evidence for his existence, an estimate of his relation to Christianity" Was published by Shirley Jackson Case of Chicago in 1912.

The denial of the skeptics has benefited the historical Jesus-research in that it has led to an even greater and more careful study of the sources of the historical life of Jesus than had been made before.

C. The Results of the Historical Research.

There has been a frank and fearless search through all the sources for the truth concerning the historicity of Jesus and out of this research has come a skepticism as to many of the orthodox beliefs and even the actual existance of Jesus such as has never been before. In tearing down the theological Jesus they would tear down the historical Jesus also. The one seems to lead out of the other.

In the first place the miracles of Jesus have

been questioned in the light of modern science and either rejected as myth or an interpretation more in accordance with natural law placed upon them. Such events as the virgin birth, the transfiguration, etc. are consigned to mere tradition borrowed from other religions by the writers of the Gospels in order to picture Jesus as great. The literal inspiration of the writing of the books of the Bible is no longer accepted by many and the reliance upon human experience has brought about the question as to the truth of the gospels. Religious ideals are no longer judged in the light of the standards of the past. Thus, in many cases, Jesus has become unimportant as a revealer of religious truth and it becomes more easy to deny His existence altogether.

The supernatural nature of Jesus has been denied by many and He is looked upon as a man among men; as having developed mentally and physically as any other man: as having no claim to Messiahship, that being a creation of the disciples, and since they created thus far, some say, why not believe that the entire idea of Jesus is a product of the immagination. The return of Jesus to earth is no longer accepted, but looked upon as an invention of the early believers. He is

no longer thought of by many as one to be worshiped. This, too, is thought to be a notion of the early Christians and since they could invent such a belief the whole story of Jesus might be an invention of their immagination.

"It is at least only fair to admit that modern critical study has prepared the soil out of which queries of this sort readily spring. ... Yet 'liberal' theology's own belief in the historicity of Jesus is not in the least disturbed. When the traditional view of him has been virtually demolished, moderns assert that they have only removed fungoid growths from his historical form, and that they would thus not only restore his original figure but also make him more significant for religious thought."[1]

There are at present different degrees of belief concerning the life of Jesus. Some hold that the liberals have rejected too much of the supernatural and hold to the old Christology. Another group, the "modern positivists" or semi-liberals hold that Jesus has been underestimated by the liberals. Still another school complains that the liberals place too high

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1. Case, Shirley Jackson, The Historicity of Jesus, P.22.

an estimate on Him - that He has no significance for modern religion, while still others deny His historicity altogether, regard the Gospels as myth, and would prove that He never lived.

Thus we have opinions differing as to the historicity of Jesus all the way from the conservative who says that the historical Jesus must be identified with the real supernatural Christ of experience to the skeptic who says that the historical Jesus is at best only a myth. The problem of recent writers of biographies of the historical Jesus has been to defend His existence each from his own point of view and thus have arisen very different and very interesting biographies.

But it is interesting to note that whatever opinion a man has of Jesus' historicity and the records of His life there is a strange loyalty to Him, so that the "Song of a Heathen," by Richard Watson Gilder, becomes the song of modern historical research.

"If Jesus Christ is a man, -
And only a man, - I say
That of all mankind will I cleave to him,
And to him will I cleave alway.
"
"If Jesus Christ is a god, -
And the only God, - I swear
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea and the air!" 1

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1. Hill, Carolyn, The World's Great Religious Poetry, P. 323

CHAPTER II

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE OF THE HISTORICITY OF JESUS

The writing of a biography of Jesus from the historical point of view is not so easy as one might at first think. In the first place "the historical study of the life of Jesus has had to create its own methods for itself."[1] At first the "lives" were based on a harmony of the four gospels. The Tubingen school, founded by F.C.Bauer in the nineteenth century, was the first to stress the difference between John and the Synoptics and the necessity of choosing between them.

In order to construct a historical life of Jesus it is essential that the biographer search carefully all available sources giving evidence of that life. While the canonical Gospels are the most complete of all the sources and other sources merely mention Jesus incidentally, it is necessary to study all sources no matter how unimportant they may seem. The canonical

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1. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 6.

Gospels were written by men more or less biased who believed in the supernatural character of Jesus. It behooves the historical biographer, therefore, to search the secular witnesses for light upon their problem, for while there are no first hand materials on Jesus' life, there is a considerable amount of second hand materials.

A. The Non-Christian Sources:

1.The Hebrew Sources:

a. Talmud and Midrash.

The Talmud is a collection of Rabbinical writings which cover the period from about 200 B.C. to 600 A.D. Arthur Drews, in his denial of the historicity of Jesus, sweeps the Talmud as containing evidence of Jesus' historicity aside with little more than a gesture. He says,

"One would suppose that, in works intended solely for a Jewish public, the Rabbis of the time would not fail to take the opportunity of attacking Jesus, if He spoke and acted as the gospels describe. Instead of this, they almost entirely ignore him, and, when they do mention him, their references have not the least historical importance."[1]

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1. Drews, Arthur, The Witnesses to the Historicity of Jesus, Page 11.

The Jewish author, Joseph Klausner, writing a biography of Jesus (Jesus of Nazareth) for his own people, gives a careful study of the Talmud and Midrash and also comes to the conclusion that there are few references to Jesus in the Talmud and those are of "little historical value since they partake of the nature of vituperation and polemic against the founder of a hated party, rather than of objective accounts of historical value."[1] He gives two reasons for this: first, the writers of the Talmud "on the whole refer rarely to the events of the period of the Second Temple."[2] He gives as an example the fact that they virtually ignore the Maccabean struggle and fail to mention the name of so important a person as Judas Maccabeus. Second, that the life of Jesus was so inconspicuous that they failed to notice it until after His death when "all the noble qualities of Jesus which the disciples had found in him were twisted into defects, and all the miracles attributed to him, into horrible and unseemly marvels."[3]

Klausner contrasts the stories of Jesus in the Talmud with those in the Gospels. The Gospels say that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit, the Talmud says that

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1. Klausner, Joseph, Jesus of Nazareth, Pages 18-19
2. Ibid. Page 19
3. Ibid. Page 19

He was born a bastard; the Gospels say that He performed miracles by the Holy Spirit; the Talmud says that He used magic; the Gospels hold up Jesus' opposition to the Pharisees and Scribes for admiration, the Talmud calls Him "a sinner in Israel" and a "scoffer against the words of the wise".

These things, according to Klausner, were written before the Gospels had taken their final shape and prove that before that time there were written and oral accounts of the life of Jesus. "It therefore follows that the accounts in the first three Gospels are fairly early, and that it is unreasonable to question either the existence of Jesus (as certain scholars have done both in the eighteenth century and in our own time) or his general character as it is depicted in these Gospels. This is the single historical value which we can attribute to the early Talmudical accounts of Jesus." 1

He goes on, however, to give two more ways in which the writings of the Talmud are of historical importance: first, by giving us some idea of what the Sages of Israel thought of the origin and teaching of Jesus and, second, some truths concerning the life of Jesus which the

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1. Klausner, Joseph, Jesus of Nazareth , Page 20

Gospels do not give us.

Great discrimination must be used, however, in the study of the Talmud with the purpose of finding evidences of Jesus life therein. Some passages which have been thought to refer to Jesus obviously do not. For example, the names "Ben Stada","Ben Pandera", "Balaam" do not refer to Jesus as has been supposed by some scholars. Jesus is spoken of as "Yeshu of Nazareth" or as "Such-an-one". In some cases there is a confusion between legendary stories of early origin and the stories of Jesus. But there are certain things that the Talmud says about Jesus which one may glean through careful study. Klausner summarizes these as follows:

"(a) 1. That his name was Yeshua (Yeshu) of Nazareth
2. That he 'practiced sorcery' and beguiled and led Israel astray.
3. That he mocked at the words of the wise.
4. That he expounded scripture in the same manner as the Pharisees.
5. That he had five disciples.
6. That he said that he was not come to take aught away from the Law or to add to it.
7. That he was hanged (crucified) as a false teacher and beguiler on the eve of the Passover which happened on a Sabbath.
8. That the disciples healed the sick in his name."[1]

(b)"Statements of less trustworthy character are:
1. That he was the bastard of an adultress and that his father was Pandera or Pantere.
2. That for forty days before his crucifixion a herald went out proclaiming why Jesus was put to death, so that they might come

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1. Klausner, Joseph, Jesus of Nazareth, Page 46.

and plead in his favour, but none was found to do so.
3. That there was doubt whether Jesus had any share in the world to come." [1]

One of the great values of these statements is that they show what the attitude toward Jesus was "in the first generation of the Tannaim who lived after the Destruction, and who counted among them the most learned and pious of the nation."[2] Klausner says that to Jesus himself there was not the bitter feeling and hostility that was felt later when the Christian people began to oppress the Jews.[3]

Thus, the writings of the Talmud are not to be wholly cast aside as of no historical importance in studying the historical life of Jesus. They show, first, that before the gospels were written there were accounts of Jesus' life written and oral and thus prove that the Gospels themselves did not invent Jesus, since He was known of before they were completed. Second, They give us an idea of what the leading intellects of Judiasm thought of Jesus. Third, they throw some light upon His general character, confirming that given in the Gospels. Fourth, they give some hints as to His life which we do

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1. Klausner, Joseph, Jesus of Nazareth, Page 46
2. Ibid. Page 46
3. Ibid, Page 46

not have in the Gospels. Fifth, they confirm some of the statements as to His life found in the Gospels.

b. The Tol'doth Yeshu or Ma'aseh Talui.

It is believed that this book is of very early origin and that some of the Christian writers of the second century knew of it. But the book which we have at present is believed by Krauss to have been composed in about 500 A.D. Klausner, however, believes that it was not composed before the tenth century and it therefore "cannot possibly possess any historical value nor in any way be used as material for the life of Jesus"[1], except to give some light on what the Jews from the fifth to the tenth century thought of Jesus.

"The most superficial reading of this book serves to prove that we have here nothing beyond a piece of folklore, in which are confusedly woven early and late Talmudic and Midrashic legends and sayings concerning Jesus, together with Gospel accounts (which the author of the Tol'doth perverts in a fashion derogatory to Jesus), and other popular legends, many of which are mentioned by Celsus, and Tertullian and later Church Fathers."[2]

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1. Klausner, Joseph, Jesus of Nazareth, Page 53
2. Ibid. Page 51

2. The Greek and Latin Sources:

a. Josephus

There are just two passages in Josephus' works (37-38 A.D.) concerning Jesus, both of which are in the "Antiquities". The first is a paragraph which has been much studied by the scholars with results ranging anywhere from the belief that the whole passage is a Christian interpolation[1] to the belief that it contains no Christian interpolation but is entirely from the pen of Josephus.[2]

Klausner believes that some of the first passage is Christian interpolation, while the rest is genuine. He says that Josephus the Jew could never have written the words "he was the Messiah" but he believes that "he described him as a 'wise man" just as he described John the Baptist as a 'good man: He described Jesus as 'a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure', just as he described John the Baptist as one who 'called upon the Jews to exercise virtue,etc.' and he described Jesus as a 'doer of wonderful works' (for Josephus himself was a firm believer in miracles)".[3] Klausner also includes as from the pen of Josephus the following words: "he drew after him many Jews and also Greeks", because, says

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1. See Drews, Arthur, The Historicity of Jesus, Page 10
2. See Case, Shirley Jackson, The Historicity of Jesus, Pg.257
3. Klausner, J. Jesus of Nazareth, Page 57
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Klausner, there were at the time Josephus wrote many Greeks in the Christian Church, and, "they who loved him at the first did not cease to do so even after Pilate had condemned him to crucifixion at the suggestion of the principal men among us," and, that "the race of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct even now."

Thus Klausner gives the passage as follows:(the underlined words indicate the suspected interpolations)

"Now there was about this time (i.e., about the time of the rising against Pilate who wished to extract money from the Temple for the purpose of bringing water to Jerusalem from a distant spring) Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man. For he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Messiah and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first ceased not (so to do), for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine Prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him: and the race of the Christians, so named from him, are not extinct even now." 1

Klausner says that it is difficult to decide whether the interpolated passages stand in the place of other words of Josephus or whether they are entirely additions." "But we can almost certainly say that Josephus, writing as a Pharisee and for the sake of the Romans, was chary of saying anything either favorable or detailed about

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1. Klausner, J.,Jesus of Nazareth, Page 55-56

Jesus or about Christians, and was satisfied to make just a few general and superficial remarks, written with great care and containing nothing of much positive value to the Christians, nor much about their Messiah."[1]

The second passage Klausner believes to be entirely genuine. In this passage Josephus mentions James, the "brother of Jesus, who was called Christ." In neither of these passages, however, do we learn much about the life of Jesus, "yet even from these fragmantary statements we at least receive confirmation of his and his brother James' existance, of his career as a wonder-worker and teacher, and of his terrible death -- his crucifixion at the hands of Pilate with, at least, the concent of the principal Jews."[2]

Oscar Holtzmann, in his "Life of Jesus", on the other hand, states his belief that the entire first passage "is unquestionably spurious. And as there are no inherent contradictions discernable in it, it would be a piece of pure arbitrariness to attempt to pick out a genuine kernel from what is as a whole spurious."[3] Holtzmann does away with the passage in the following

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1. Klausner, J., Jesus of Nazareth, Page 58
2. Ibid. Page 60
3. Holtzmann, Oscar, The Life of Jesus, Page 16.

manner:

1. The passage says that Jesus was a teacher of "such as receive the truth," This infers that Jesus taught the truth, therefore, it must be from a Christian writer.

2. The statement " and many Jews, many also of the people of the Greeks, did he draw to himself" is in "direct contradiction to historical fact" and could not, therefore, have been written by the historian Josephus.

3. Josephus could not have believed that "this man was the Messiah", else he would not have been content to write so little about him.

4. The passage refering to Jesus' trial, crucifixion and resurrection is from a Christian standpoint and must therefore have been written by a Christian.

5. The words "Christian folk", Holtzmann says, implies a common descent and must therefore be from a Christian writer. Since there were all peoples within the Christian body it could not have been meant to be taken literally, but refers to Christian brotherhood which could not have been written by a Jew.[1]

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1. Holtzmann, Oscar, The Life of Jesus, Page 15-16

Holtzmann believes that the whole passage takes the place of words by Josephus which was displeasing to Christian readers and that the substitution took place in the period between Origen and Eusebius.

b. Tacitus, Suetonius and Pliny the Younger.

Tacitus, who in his Annals (115-117) refers to the Christian persecution under Nero, is generally considered the most important and most reliable of the non-Christian sources for the historicity of Jesus. Joseph Cullen Ayer, Jr. in his "Source Book for Ancient Church History" says that Tacitus "although not an eye-witness of the persecution, had exceptionally good opportunities for obtaining accurate information, and his account is entirely trustworthy."[1] In one passage Tacitus writes of Christ as the founder of Christianity. "Christ, from whom the name was derived, had been put to death in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate."[2]

But the task remains to find whether or not this also is a Christian interpolation. If not we may regard it as a trustworthy historical evidence of the existence of Jesus. There have been those who have believed that

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1. Ayer, Joseph C., Source Book for Ancient Church History, Page 6
2. Ibid. Page 6

this passage is not from Tacitus or, if it is, then he wrote only from what he knew of the "legend" of the Christians. Hochart, the French scholar, believed that the passage was inserted in the Annals of Tacitus in the fifteenth century by Poggio Bracciolini.[1] The arguments of Hochart are made much use of by Drews in his denial of Jesus' historicity.[2] Nevertheless, "this extreme skepticism has failed to win any substantial approval, nor are we able to accept the arguments sometimes urged against the sentence which refers particularly to Jesus' death under Pilate."[3] The majority of the scholars agree that this passage is genuine.

But where did Tacitus, writing over eighty years after the death of Jesus, get his information? It has been conjectured that he may have had access to official records, but this is only a conjecture. Case says, "This reliability does not suffer by admitting that he may have had his information from current Christian tradition: this possibiltty merely robs us of the convenience of citing Tacitus as an independent witness."[4]

Klausner and Holtzmann both cite Tacitus as an important witness to the historicity of Jesus, but of

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Case, S.J., The Historicity of Jesus, Page 247
2. Drews, A, The Historicity of Jesus, Page 41
3. Case, S.J., The Historicity of Jesus, Page 247
4. Ibid. Page 249

course there is not enough information contained in the passage on which to base a "life of Jesus". Klausner says, however, that"we do not need the evidence of a Tacitus to know that at the beginning of the second century the belief was widespread that there had been a "Messiah", or "Christ", who was condemned to death by Pontius Pilate."[1]

Suetonius, a contemporary of Tacitus, in his "Life of Claudius" mentions one Chrestus, but whether "Chrestus" is meant to be Christus is a disputed question. Drews, of course, regards the work of Suetonius as containing no evidence for the historicity of Jesus and states that both Julicher and Weinel omit Suetonius in their list of non-Christian evidences and J.Weiss admits that "the passage in Suetonius relating to the Jewish disturbances at Rome in the time of Claudius 'impulsore Chresto' betrays so inaccurate a knowledge of the facts that it cannot seriously be regarded as a witness."[2] Holtzmann, also, omits both Suetonius and Pliny from his "sources for the life of Jesus."

Klausner, however, uses Suetonius as one of the sources, stating that the words of Suetonius " he

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1. Klausner, J., Jesus of Nazareth, Page 60
2. Drews, Arthur, The Historicity of Jesus, Page 20

banished from Rome the Jews who made great tumult because of Chrestus" agree entirely with the statement in the Acts of the Apostles[3] that Aquila and Priscilla left Italy "because of the decree of Claudius that all the Jews should leave Rome." "If, with very many scholars, we identify 'Chrestus' with 'Christus' we have here reliable evidence that, within fifteen or twenty years after the death of Jesus, many Jews, even as far off as Rome, believed that Jesus had existed and that he was the Messiah."[1]

Klausner believes that, even if we suppose that Chrestus was not Christus, as Graetz states, but an apostle of Christ "the fact that only twenty years after the death of Jesus, there were to be found Christian apostles and teachers, is proof not only of his existence, but also of the important effect of his personal influence."[2] He believes that the idea that Chrestus was a Jewish Messiah who rose up in Rome is inconceivable, and he draws from Suetonius' words the conclusion"that a Christian community was founded in Rome during the fifth decade of the first century, i.e. not later than ten years after the crucifixion. This

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1. Klausner, J., Jesus of Nazareth, Page 61
2. Ibid., Page 61
3. Acts 18: 2

is an important fact from every point of view."[1]

Thus we see that the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin sources have little to give us toward the reconstruction of the historical life of Jesus, yet there is enough in them to give proof of His existence and a few hints of the major events of His life, especially His crucifixion. This is little and yet, this is after all the most important thing and answers the question which must be answered before we begin to write His biography, "Did this man called Jesus, the Christ, really live on earth?" We find Hebrews and Pagans answering "Yes". But for a more detailed knowledge of His life and character we must turn to the Christian sources to see what they have to offer us.

B. Early Christian Sources:

a. Paul the Apostle.

There is little actual information in the Epistles of Paul concerning the life of Jesus, but what there is is genuine. Such men as Drews, however, affirm that Paul never thought of an earthly Jesus or else he was creating a Christ-myth all his own. These beliefs cannot stand under a careful study of the Epistles, for Paul mentions a few incidents in the life of Jesus, such as His crucifixion, and the last supper, which show

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1. Klausner, J., Jesus of Nazareth, Page 61

that what Paul actually did was to take for granted the existence of Jesus whose memory was still fresh in the minds of men who had known Him. It would have been as senseless for Paul to set about to prove the existence of Jesus as it would for a writer of today to set about to prove that Woodrow Wilson had lived. He is not writing to prove the historicity of Jesus, but to strengthen those who believed in Him and there was no need to mention the actual events of His life. "The historicity of Jesus is a prerequsite to Paul's Christian life and work."[1]

Whether Paul himself actually knew Jesus or not rests on the interpretation of I Corinthians IX:1 and II Corinthians V:16. Paul is probably refering here to their knowledge of the earthly life of Jesus rather than to their personal aquaintance with Him. Paul does, however, give genuine testimony to the existence of Jesus. L. Warschauer says in the Introduction of his "Historical Life of Christ", "We would merely remind the reader that, even had none of the Gospels come down to us, we should have irrefragable and detailed testimony to the historical Jesus in the Letters of

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1. Case, S.J., The Historicity of Jesus, Page 200

the Apostle Paul, written in the fifth and sixth decades of the first century by one who was clearly acquainted with men who had themselves been on terms of personal intimacy with our Lord. ... The Pauline Epistles are sufficient, and more than sufficient to dispose of the so-called 'Christ-Myth' theory."[1]

Klausner, on the other hand, says, "It follows from the character of Paul's teaching that this earliest historical witness is least valuable for our knowledge of the life of Jesus,"[2] and, "In all Paul's writings we find no reliable historical facts about the life and work of Jesus, beyond the vague hint that he was 'firstborn of many brethren' (Romans VIII:29), the statement that he was crucified, the account of the last supper which Jesus held on the night of his arrest (I Corinthians XI:23-26), and the questionable statement to the effect that Jesus was of the lineage of the House of David."[3]

The few things that Paul tells us do not give us enough to construct in any way a life of Jesus. Holtzmann says, "Not only are there no answers here to our questions as to where and when; even Jesus' preaching, the

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1. Warschauer, J., The Historical Life of Christ, Pages 3 & 4
2. Klausner, J., Jesus of Nazareth, Page 64
3. Ibid. Pages 63 - 64

oppositions which affected his life, even the precise circumstances which led up to his crucifixion, are either not mentioned at all, or only mentioned in the scantiest fashion."[1]

We must, therefore, turn to other Christian sources in the search for information concerning His life.

b. The Early Fathers of the Christian Church.

The most important of the Church Fathers for the search of the historical Jesus are those who wrote before the Cannonical Gospels were chosen as such --- Justin Martyr (135 A.D.) and Papias (140 A.D.).

Justin offers us information which is not in our Gospels. He says that the manger of Jesus was in a cave near Bethlehem. He also tells us that Jesus made yokes and ploughs; that Jesus was set upon a judge's seat with the words, "Come! Deliver Thou judgement unto us!" at the time of His trial. Holtzmann believes that this information may be historically true even though it is not in our cannonical gospels and that Justin's source was no doubt the Gospel of Peter. Holtzmann believes, also,

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1. Holtzmann, O., The Life of Jesus, Pages 10-11

that Justin's statement that "at the crucifixion Jesus' disciples deserted Him and only turned to Him again in consequence of the resurrection," is probably historically true and that "Justin here follows some better Gaspel tradition than that contained in the Biblical Gospels."[1]

Papias, a contemporary of Justin Martyr, was bishop of Hieropolis in Phrygia in the beginning of the second century. With the exception of a few fragments, his work "The Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord" has been lost. Eusebius and Origen, however, quote from Papias and from them we have some of Papias' words saved. The quotations of Eusebius deal with the origin of the Gospels, while those of Origen deal with Jesus Himself, describing the material blessings of the days of the Messiah's reign --- the Millennium --- and have little value in constructing a life of Jesus.

c. The Apocryphal and Uncanonical Gospels.

There is so much pure legend in the Apocryphal gospels that they are of little historical importance, for it is almost impossible to separate the little

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1. Holtzmann, O., The Life of Jesus, Page 20

historical material from the much legendary. The uncannonical gospels are more reliable, but only a few fragments of them have come down to us. The chief of these are the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of Peter.

Resch believes that the Gospel of the Hebrews was compiled from the Gospel of Matthew, which would make it later than the Gospel of Matthew or Mark. Klausner thinks that there has been some confusion of the two versions of the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of the Ebionites and the Gospel of the Nazarenes. According to the evidence of Jerome, he says, the Gospel of the Nazarenes is the Gospel of the Hebrews and was first written in Hebrew or Aramaic, according to Harnack, between 65 and 100 A.D. which would make it no later than Luke and the Fourth Gospel.

Holtzmann says that this Gospel as a source can be ranked with the Johannine Gospel in value, though we have at the present only fragments of it.

On the whole the Gospel of the Hebrews greatly resembles the Synoptic Gospels and yet seems to be

independent of them. There is no reference to the birth of Jesus, but there is to the temptation. The fact that this Gospel was written in the language in which Jesus talked also enhances its value and throws light on the Greek of the cannonical gospels. Holtzmann considers it one of the primary sources we posess for the life of Jesus,[1] while Klausner says, "The new facts which it supplies about the life of Jesus may not be very important since they are mostly legendary."[2]

A large fragment of the Gospel of Peter was discovered in the winter of 1886-87 in an ancient Christian tomb at Akhmim in Upper Egypt, but was not published until 1892. This fragment relates the events of Jesus life from His trial to His resurrection. There are evidences in Eusebius that this gospel existed as early as 200 A.D. It contains picturesque details beyond the accounts as given in Matthew, Luke, and John, and there are more supernatural incidents, as in the later apocryphal writings. There is some confusion in the statements concerning Pilate and Herod. There is nothing new in the Gospel of Peter concerning the

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1. Holtzmann, O., The Life of Jesus, Page 46
2. Klausner, J., Jesus of Nazareth, Page 68

life of Jesus, and it is therefore of little value in the reconstruction of His life.

There is much later apocryphal literature which is so legendary and fantastic that it holds no value and will not be discussed here.

B. The Canonical Gospels.

We have seen that there is but little information in the records outside the Canonical Gospels which gives any light on the historical life of Jesus. It remains, then, for the writer of His biography from a historical point of view to draw the great majority of his material from the Canonical Gospels, and even these are considered of no historical value by those who would regard the historical Jesus as a myth. A careful study of them, however, show that they differ in many respects from the myths of the ages and from the apocryphal gospels. They rely not on authorship for acceptance, since within no gospel is there given any claim to authorship, but on the contents itself rests their authority. Throughout the gospels the fact of the existence of the man called Jesus is more or less taken for granted. It was an unthought of thing that anyone would ever attempt

to prove that Jesus never existed. The meaning of His life had, however, been questioned and it was the purpose of the writers of the four gospels to interpret rather than to prove His life.

Before the close of the second century the gospels had not only been written, but had been given first place in the New Testament. A detailed account of the origin of the gospels cannot be given here. As stated before, the Tubingen school was the first to stress the difference between the first three gospels and John. A careful comparison of Matthew, Mark and Luke show that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a common source, Mark, therefore, must be the earliest of the three. Matthew and Luke are thought to have used also a common source other than Mark and sources which were not common to each other

The value of the Gospels as historical evidence of the existance of Jesus depends on whether they were written in a time when personal knowledge of the existence of Jesus was possible. Modern critical scholarship has placed the writing of them within the last thirty-five years of the first century. There are evidences within the gospels, not only

that they were written within Jesus' own generation, but there are evidences, in some at least, of having been written by an eye-witness to the events in Jesus' life, or if not written by the eye-witness, at least of coming from him. "Julicher seems quite within the proper bounds when, in summing up the results of modern critical study, he says of primitive tradition: 'The gospel was virtually completed in the home of Jesus even before his generation passed away, and believing Jews wrote it down at that time in their own language.'"[1]

The trustworthiness of the gospels as a witness to the historicity of Jesus is shown in the fact that the earlier the writing the more true to the earthly character of Jesus it is, that is, the later gospels, especially the apocryphal gospels, emphasize more the supernatural and miraculous, while the earlier are more human and historical in tone.

It follows, then, that the main source, and virtually the only one, that the modern biographer of Jesus' life writing from a historical viewpoint, has to use is the four canonical gospels --- especially the three Synoptic gospels, while his work is justified

1. Case, Shirley, J., Historicity of Jesus, Page 220

by numerous proofs of the earthly existence of Jesus from other sources.

CHAPTER III

MODERN BIOGRAPHIES OF THE HISTORICAL LIFE OF JESUS

Having reviewed the development of the historical trend in Jesus-research and the sources of the witness of the historical life of Jesus, we now turn to the modern biographies themselves.

As stated above, historical research on the life of Jesus began in Germany with Hermann Samuel Reimarus in 1768. It was he who wrote the first "Life of Jesus" from the historical viewpoint.

In the first half of the nineteenth century Strauss' works on the life of Jesus were published.

In 1861 Theodor Keim of Jurich published an outline of "The Human Development of Jesus" which may be called the first sketch of his later "Life of Jesus". Keim believed the Gospel of Matthew to be the oldest gospel and built largely upon that. The conception of Jesus portrayed by Keim disregards the gospel of John as unhistorical. When Luke digresses from Mark and Matthew Keim follows the latter. He does not use the birth and infancy stories, but builds a conception of Jesus' early development from knowledge of his later life. According to Keim, Jesus received His Messianic consciousness at His baptism and after

the imprisonment of John the Baptist, preached the kingdom of God in Galilee. Jesus' healing of the sick he does not believe to be by supernatural means and those miracles which he cannot explain he regards as exaggaration of tradition. Jesus is forced out of Galilee after the death of John the Baptist and after Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi He begins to prophecy His Passion and goes to Jerusalem where He reveals Himself as the Messiah and finally in perfect peace gives up His life as an atonement - a sacrifice. Keim uses a great deal of imagination in interpreting the inner thoughts and feelings of Jesus.

In 1863 Heinrich Holtzmann wrote a book on the Synoptic Gospels in which he gave a sketch of the life of Jesus which very closely follows the same plan as Keim's although Holtzmann uses Mark as his main source.

In 1863 Ernest Renan, a pupil of Strauss, published his "Life of Jesus", a highly imaginative and poetical work which had a great influence. Much attention was devoted in this work to the geographical setting of the life of Jesus in Palestine. He uses the Fourth Gospel as a historical document. He tries to explain the miracles of Jesus as not being by any supernatural

means. "The raising of Lazarus (John XI) ... was, according to Renan, merely a trick practiced on Jesus by his disciples who were anxious to foritfy his faith in himself which had begun to waver."[1]

In 1882 Bernhard Weiss published his "Life of Jesus." "Weiss shares with the authors of the liberal 'Lives' the assumption that Mark designed to set forth a definite 'view of the course of development of the public ministry of Jesus', and on the strength of that believes himself justified in giving a very far-reaching significance to the details offered by this Evangelist."[2] Weiss reads between the lines of Mark and explains clearly (?) what is not there. According to Klausner Weiss' work is "a dialectical compromise between the scientific view of Jesus and the religious view of 'Christ!"[3] He sees no opposition between belief in the Son of Man and the Son of God. Weiss' work is valuable for the light he throws upon some of the details of the gospel narrative.

Oskar Holtzmann wrote his "Das Leben Jesu" in 1901. It is strictly scientific, following the gospel

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1. Klausner, J., Jesus of Nazareth, Page 88
2. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 217
3. Klausner, J., Jesus of Nazareth, Page 90

of Matthew. "His method is to give free play to the magnetic power of the most important passages in the Marcan text, making other sayings of similar importance detatch themselves from their present connexion and come and group themselves round the main passage."[1] He merges several events into one event as he choses. He interprets as symbolical whatever he choses, for example, the healing of the blind man at Jericho "is to be understood as a symbolical representation of the conversion of Zacchaeus." Whenever it seems more convenient for his point of view Holtzmann leaves the Marcan record and uses his own imagination. His work has not been extremely popular, perhaps because of these peculiarities, but it has been valuable in proving that a complete life of Jesus cannot be built on Mark alone.

In 1922 George A.Barton wrote his "Jesus of Nazareth: a biography", a simple, beautiful work based on the chronology of the Synoptics, but using also material from the Fourth Gospel. This is a moderately liberal life of Jesus and aims to give a straightforward life in its Palestenian setting. Much use is made of the

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1. Schweitzer, A., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Page 297

geological surroundings, of the archeological findings, and of scientific use of the records which accord with some of the events recorded in the Gospels, for example, the use of Kepler's observation of the conjunction of certain constellations as a possible explanation of the star in the East and the birth date of Jesus. Several possible explanations are given for the disputed events, such as the feeding of the five thousand. It is a very valuable work for general reading and attempts to give the results of modern criticism.

In 1922 Joseph Klausner, a Jew writing for Jewish people, published in Jerusalem, a Life of Jesus entitled "Jesus of Nazareth". It was translated into English in 1925. Klausner's book is very valuable in that it gives the life of Jesus from a Jewish point of view and also for his criticism of the Hebrew sources and for the Jewish background he gives. "Although Dr.Klausner is quite at home in New Testament criticism, he is somewhat arbitrary and inconsistent in his distinction between historical and legendary material in the Gospel records and also at times in treating other

records to which he refers."[1] He believes Jesus to have been "too spiritual and too personal for the nationalistic ideals of Judaism."[2] Nevertheless the Jesus of Klausner's book is a much more desirable Jesus than the Jesus of some writers who would call themselves "Christian."

A very recent life of Jesus is that of J.Warschauer, "The Historical Life of Christ", published in 1927. According to the author himself this is "not merely another 'liberal' Life of Christ". "The book before the reader", he says in his Forward, "claims to be a Historical Life of Christ precisely because it claims to find its principle of interpretation in a historical element in the Gospels which until recently has been habitually ignored, or had its significance minimized, by traditionalist and liberal alike: insomuch that in the reconstruction here presented this hitherto rejected stone has become the headstone of the corner.

Were a critic to call the result an Eschatological Life of Christ, the author would not demur to such a description, simply adding, 'Eschatological, and therefore Historical."[3]

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1. Case, Adelaide T., As Modern Writers See Jesus, Pg.15
2. Ibid., Page 17
3. Warschauer, J., The Historical Life of Christ, Pg.VII

Georges Berguer published an interesting book, entitled "Some Aspects of the Life of Jesus: From the psychological and psycho-analytic point of view", in 1923. In this work Berguer offers psychological explanations for the outstanding events in the life of Jesus. The Temptation is explained as being a time of extreme introversion in Jesus' life. The transfiguration, death and resurrection have especially interesting explanations given them. Berguer is a liberal Protestant and believes firmly in the historicity of Jesus.

Shirley Jackson Case is another liberal who attempts to reconstruct a Life of Jesus in his " "Jesus: A New Biography". He says, "We of today would see Jesus, the real Jesus of history, exactly as he lived in Palestine among his contemporaries nineteen hundred years ago."

In 1929 another very interesting work on Jesus was published - Walter E. Bundy's "Our Recovery of Jesus". This is not so much a biography of Jesus as it is a treatise on Jesus and our finding of His historical character.

George Holly Gilbert in his "Student's Life of Jesus," says, "the Christian, whose life rests not upon any alleged quality of the Gospel, nor even on the written Gospel itself, but whose life consists rather in a personal relation to the living Lord, is, to say the least, as well able to investigate the documents of Christianity impartially as is the unbeliever. May the time be hastened when all investigators in this field shall loose their shoes from their feet before the central Figure of the Gospels, and recognize in Him the final expression of divine wisdom and divine love. Surely the outcome of all the critical research of our waning century is a deepening sense of the inviolable historic value of the Gospels, and now, as ever in the past, the Church awaits with undimmed hope and increasing effort the consummation of the kingdom by the revelation and power of Jesus Christ its King."

Gilbert's Life of Jesus is not a liberal Life but it is thoroughly scientific. It does not discuss the teachings of Jesus but aims to give a critical examination of the life of Jesus and seek openmindedly the truth concerning His historic character and the events of His life.

Even while I have been writing this thesis another biography has come from the press: "A Life of Jesus" by Basil Mathews. Mathews says in his Preface,

"After coming back sixteen years ago for the first time from the land where Jesus lived, I started to try to write down the story of Jesus' life so that it should be at least real to myself. I tried also to set it down in language real and living for any person who has never even read or heard anything about him.

"To do that with complete success is, of course, impossible. In the attempt, however, I lived for months at a time and traveled one year after another in the land where he lived, and have followed the tracks along which Jesus walked in Palestine. I have tried through those years to feel and think my way into the life that he lived, the truth that he taught, and,most of all, what he himself was in relation to the life of the people under the Roman Empire in his day. This has not only thrown light on many things that were before obscure and difficult for me to understand, but it has helped me to make the drama of his life so enthralling and convincing to myself that I could not but try to set it down."

Mathews follows closely the gospel records using all four gospels. He places the birth of Jesus "not later than B.C. 5 and not earlier than B.C.8." He believes that Luke got the account of the virgin birth from James the brother of Jesus or from Joanna, a close friend of Mary.

Some of the cases of leprosy healed by Jesus were not leprosy but some sort of skin desease thought to be leprosy by the people of Jesus' day.

"With regard to 'miracles' the author feels that the one attitude that is certain to be proved to be wrong as modern science - both physical and psychological - advances, is that of denial. For example, anyone who in 1900 predicted the actual achievements of the 1930's in wireless transmission and television would have been met with derisive incredulity. Our attitude toward and understanding of miracle as a reasonable event in a spiritual universe is bound to undergo similar modification."

In regard to the Last Supper, Mathews takes the position of Joseph Jacobs that Jesus put the supper on twenty-four hours.

The contradictions in the gospel accounts of the resurrection are explained by the "utter bewilderment into which the disciples were all thrown by the

incredible news that Jesus was risen; and, on the other hand, they throw into more vivid and clear relief the central facts: first, that the grave was empty; secondly, that the disciples had such real, personal fellowship with Jesus after he had risen that all life was changed from defeat to triumph and from grief to superlative joy; and, thirdly, the fact written indelibly and indisputably across the centuries from that day to this - that in the absolute certainty of that experience these previously grief-ridden, despondent, broken men went out with radiant certainty to conquer the world."

Such is the latest Life of Jesus - a Life which fully appreciates the historical Jesus; a Life which freely uses the accumulated knowledge of the past years of historical research, but a Life which also appreciates the unique character of Jesus and sees in Him the living Christ of Christian experience. It is for such a Life that the world has been waiting.

SUMMARY

The main purpose of this thesis has not been to prove or disprove the historicity of Jesus or to evaluate the different schools as over against each other. The purpose here has been to discover the influence of the various schools of historical research on the biographies of Jesus.

Hence, the first chapter was a study of those schools, keeping always in mind their influence on the biographies rather than their broader influence on theology in general. We have seen that historical research in the life of Jesus arose from a rebellion against the primitive belief in the supernatural Christ which ignored the historical Jesus. During the development of the historical research one theory after another has arisen which at the time were condemned, but many of which gradually influenced the historical study of the human life of Jesus. One problem after another has arisen and attempts have been made to answer them. The chief of these problems have been the problems of miracle, or gospel contradiction,

of the supernatural character of Jesus, of the Messianic consciousness of Jesus, and finally, there has arisen the problem as to whether He actually lived or not. The conclusion reached in this chapter was that the influence of these various theories in historical research has caused many biographies of Jesus to be written which vary distinctly in their outlook on His earthly life and character.

In the second chapter a study of the sources of Jesus' life was made to discover just how much actual material the biographers have on which to base their "Lives of Jesus". We have seen that, although there is proof of His actual existence in the sources, there is little outside the canonical gospels on which to build a biography of Jesus. The modern biographers usually, therefore, proceed with the assumption that Mark is the basic account and follow his plan of the life of Jesus, supplementing it with the other accounts as they seem to the writer to fit into Mark's plan.

In the third chapter a study of some of the modern biographies themselves was made. From this study we have seen how the biographies have actually been affected by the historical research and how they differ from each other in their use of the sources and in their conception of the life and character of Jesus.

We have seen that the historical trend in Jesus' research has brought a flood of biographies of Jesus and that these biographies have changed with the development of historical research, While practically using the same sources they differ widely in the interpretation of those sources.

We have attempted to answer the question, "How has historical research affected the biographies of Jesus?" by showing,in the first place, that it was not until historical resaerch began that any "Lives of Jesus" worthy of mention were written, second, that historical research has practically made the biographies and explains their differences in the interpretation of the historical life of Jesus, and third, that while the biographies differ widely in some cases, their aim has been one - to get back to the historical Jesus.

Thus, for the last two centuries one of the main trends of those writing of Jesus has been to portray His life as He lived it in Palestine nearly two thousand years ago; to make Him more understandable to the people of the present; in a certain sence to place Him more on our level that we might look squarely at Him and see if, perchance, we might copy our human earthly lives after His human earthly life. Some biographers have practically failed, while others have been more successful, but their efforts have been earnest and sincere and great value has

come from them. Complaint has been made that they have tried to reconstruct Jesus into a man of their own day and environment and have taken away the spiritual Jesus, and indeed there is danger of so doing, but the later biographers of His life have realized this more fully and have happily retained the spiritual significance of Jesus while portraying His historical life.

There has been a growing beauty in the biographies. With the years of historical research there has been, in spite of seeming conflicts and controversies, an increased appreciation and understanding of the Man of Galilee. With historical research has come a greater interest in the land where Jesus lived - the natural setting of His life, the people of the land and their customs. We have such men as Barton and Mathews spending much time in Palestine studying as nearly as possible the environment of Jesus' life; walking as literally as possible in His footsteps; and striving to put themselves in His place in order to understand Him more fully before attempting to construct a biography of His life.

The pendulum has swung from one side to the other until the historical trend in Jesus biography is much like the poet, Eunice Tietjens' experience of the "Great Man".

"I cannot always feel His greatness,
Sometimes He walks beside me, step by step.
And paces slowly in the ways -
The simple, wingless ways
That my thoughts tread. He gossips with me then,
And finds it good;
Not as an eagle might, His great wings folded,
be content,
To walk a little, knowing is His choice,
But as a simple man,
And I forget.

"Then suddenly a call floats down
From the clear airy spaces,
The great keen, lonely heights of being.
And He who was my comrade hears the call
And rises from my side, and soars,
Deep-chanting, to the heights.
Then I remember.
And my upward gaze goes with Him, and I see
Far off against the sky
The glint of golden sunlight on His wings."

It has been a tremendous task, this unearthing of the historical Jesus from the debris of theological dogma, but it has been a paying task and will certainly lead to a clearer understanding of the spiritual Jesus. At times the biographers "forget His greatness" and He becomes a "simple man". At other times, and this, I believe is the growing tendency at present, He is exalted until He soars the heights of supernatural Christology. But while we gaze upward at "the glint of golden sunlight on His wings" it is hoped that we will not lose sight of the historical Jesus who left us an example that we should follow in His footsteps.

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